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Leading Change in a Downturn

Watching the news about the credit crunch is beginning to be incredibly dispiriting. Usually some financial expert is trying to forecast whether the next few months will be a recession, a depression ("the worst since 1929!") or just simply Armageddon. The pessimism is palpable. In these negative situations it can be so tempting to stop doing the day job, become immobilised and simply feel that the whole world is about to fall apart.

But, the fact is, many of us have been here before and we have lived to talk about it. We have lived through 9/11 and the dot-com crash in the last decade. Some of us have survived the recessions of 1973, 1984 and 1992. The one big learning, we all seem to share out of all this adversity, is that organisations continue to change and if anything the imperative to execute strategies flawlessly is even more critical given that resources, funding and time become incredibly compressed in these times.

So what can you do? **The five important lessons we have learned about implementing change in a downturn:**

1. **Executives and Managers must be out talking with people about what's going on in the organisation and the economy.** You need to increase the amount they are talking about change initiatives. The temptation is to back off and not want to 'walk-the-floor'. This is fatal. It creates a void just when people, like investors, are fearful about their futures. Helping re-build people's confidence is key. Fear comes from a lack of ability to predict the future – help people to build realistic expectations about the future.
2. **Tell people what won't change.** Already many employees report that they are overwhelmed by change in their organisations and lives. Help them see what is stable. If you don't do this then their 'inner demons' will be telling them everything is going to change, nothing will be the same. They then become overwhelmed by what is going on and become unable to react.
3. **Engage people in looking for better ways to change.** Pulling people into teams and meetings about what will change and how to change it is incredibly powerful. There is something in the human psyche that really responds to being part of something. Use that as a force for change in your organisations rather than driving change by telling people. In other words use 'pull' more than 'push'.
4. **Have two change plans.** If you have to lay people off (and hopefully this will never

Important Dates

Public Programme Dates

Location: London
3-5th December 08
(limited availability)

3-5th February 09
31st March-2nd April
2-4th June
15-17th September
17-19th November

"Excellent – tailored content and made relevant to each employee on course. Content was well presented and mood was maintained well throughout. Really enjoyed the course."
Programme Manager

For further information on our Public Programmes please contact Jane Mellor on +44(0)1444 450777, or go to our website for details.

Upcoming Free Webinars

1. **Increasing your Personal Adaptability during major change**
19th November
2. **Getting Started and Tools and tactics across the Project Lifecycle with PCI Tools Online**
(These dates are re-runs of the successful Webinars held in September/October.)
Part 1 - 12th November
Part 2 - 9th December

[Click here to register now](#) or contact Clare (clare.hayward@changefirst.com) with the Webinar name in the subject with the date you are interested in.

Will you be able to access the Webinar?

happen) then you need two change plans. One plan details how you will manage and help the people leaving. The second and often the one missed, describes how you will manage the 'survivors'. Many of you will know that the survivors go through their own change curve. They often have feelings of denial, anger, bargaining and almost certainly depression. Additionally research has indicated that they can suffer from feelings of guilt - "Why was my colleague chosen and not me?" Sometimes organisations ignore this. The management sentiment is that 'they are lucky to still have a job'. The problem is that this leaves resentment and resistance in place. A well executed change plan will help mitigate this and ensure that the organisations become productive again sooner.

5. **Keep your finger on the change pulse.** It's critical to keep tracking people's reactions to change. You can use simple Changefirst tools – like the *Adapter Readiness Assessment* – to track where people are and the tactics we provide can help you respond quickly and effectively to any change situation. Those of you who have been through our PCI training should take a look at PCI Tools Online at http://www.changefirst.com/pci_tools/

And, for you as a Change Agent?

Your change agent role becomes even more critical in this environment. You will need all your vision, sense of purpose, execution skills and courage but you also need to manage your own resilience. To stay resilient you should take care to avoid the 'busy fool' syndrome where you rush around just doing things for the sake of it or to be noticed. Get yourself focused and try and stay optimistic. More than anything stay agile and expect everything to change - even if it doesn't! Being surprised is often the trigger for a loss of control that generates your resistance. For more information about Resilience go to http://www.changefirst.com/newsletters/01_04_05.htm

Follow the link below to check. It will involve downloading some items to your computer, which can take some time. This is necessary for successful registration.

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